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School Committee Minutes 04/24/2007

Approved on May 22, 2007

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 2007
7:30 PM

Present: Susan Lovelace, Chair
Sean Garballey, Vice Chair
Jeff Thielman, Secretary
Denise Burns
Joe Curran
Sue Sheffler
Ronald Spangler

Superintendent: Nate Levenson
Asst. Supt.: Kevin Hutchinson
Chief Financial Off Sue Mazzarella
Sp. Ed. Director: Barbara Cataldo
Student Reps.: Sean Conroy and Ella Hartenian

Susan Lovelace, Chair had a moment of silence for Moderator John Leone for his loss of his son Paul Leone, an Arlington High School senior and sends best wishes to Arlington High School senior Matthew Clarke for a quick recovery.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Debra Rose Brillati, Allen Street resident and Thompson School parent relayed deep distress of process of the changes to the Therapeutic program for K-5 students in the Arlington Public Schools and sent letter to Superintendent, School Committee and others via email and questions the process and will school committee hold the administration accountable for this new plan.

Kevin Richardson and David Blakely, Veterans of the Armed Services handed out statements on how the observance of Veterans Day was omitted from the last year's school calendar.

Linda Thomilson, Ottoson Math teacher was very proud of her students who made the geometric art projects that brighten up the School Committee Room, and all members are invited to the Ottoson to see additional student work.

Diane Davidson, Home Schools her children and was displeased with the letter from the school regarding the change in the CTDS program and wanted Superintendent to know her dissatisfaction.

Nancy Bloom, Silva Street resident and parent of 10th grade student would like this CTDS program put back into the budget before it is finalized.

CONSENT AGENDA – all items listed with an asterisk (*) are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the Committee so requests, in which event the item will be considered in its normal sequence

**Approval of warrant # 071401 in the amount of \$563,875.65*

*On a motion by Mr. Garballey seconded by Mr. Thielman it was Voted to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.
Vote 7 – 0 unanimous*

DISCUSSION OF PARMENTER AND CROSBY SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Superintendent Levenson spoke briefly about the SFWG and how it is working to rebuild the Thompson and Stratton School. He stated to

build the two schools would take many millions of dollars and possible suggestions from the SFWG would be to sell off the Parmenter and Crosby Schools, and use the money from the sale to rebuild the Thompson and Stratton Schools.

Mr. O'Brien, Director of Planning came tonight to ask the School Committee Members to vote to either declare the buildings surplus for a period of five to ten years, or one year. Then after the vote, Town Meeting would vote to give jurisdiction of the buildings to the Arlington Redevelopment Board, which leases the building out for a period of time coinciding with the School Committee vote. If the School Committee wanted to sell off the buildings as Superintendent Levenson spoke about in reference with the SFWG, then maybe the committee should vote to declare the buildings permanently surplus. Town Meeting would then vote to dispose the buildings and then decide what to do with the proceeds of the sale.

Mr. O'Brien recommends to the School Committee to vote the buildings surplus for one year and give jurisdiction of the school buildings to the Redevelopment Board.

Mr. O'Brien noted that Mr. Sullivan suggests if the School Committee does declare the buildings surplus, and then asked if the School Committee members would like to see the buildings sold? If so, let the process proceed. Mr. O'Brien pointed out the many implications to be considered with the sale of the properties:

- Permanent loss
- Value
- Neighborhood impacts
- Burden on the tenants
- Zoning
- Current use

On a motion by Mr. Spangler seconded by Mr. Thielman it was Motioned to declare to make the buildings surplus for two years, through June 30, 2010.

Ms. Sheffler asked to amend the motion and make them surplus for three years.

The motion was taken off the table to receive further information.

The School Committee members asked many questions related to what would be the best for present tenants, where the money would go, and how this would affect the many families that use these buildings.

Mr. O'Brien expressed that the Redevelopment Board is responsible of keeping the buildings updated and to keep tenants informed of any decision, and would appreciate knowing sooner rather than later what the School Committees plans would be.

The School Committee members realized the impact of the vote and requested more time and additional information.

One a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was Voted to refer further discussion of the Parmenter and Crosby Schools to subcommittee of Chairs discretion, requesting to refer this to the subcommittee of Community Relations. Vote 7 – 0

VOTE ON APPROVAL OF FY 07-08 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Superintendent Levenson noted committee's preference and believe this was an oversight of not having Veterans day off this past school year and supports the decision to have the district Honor all Veterans.

On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Ms. Burns it was Voted to have the District observe Veterans Day a Holiday on the day on which it occurs and if it falls on a day during the weekend then to be observed on Friday or on Monday. Vote 7 – 0 unanimous

On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Mr. Garballey it was Voted to approve the 2007-2008 School Calendar. Vote 7 – 0 unanimous

BUDGET DISCUSSION

At the last School Committee Meeting during the Public Hearing of the FY 08 Budget Presentation the members of the School Committee requested from Superintendent Levenson additional data on changes to the FY 08 Budget. The questions asked were if a Social Studies Department Head was added into the budget then what? If a family cap on Athletic Fees were added in what would the family cap be. Also if replacing the Performing Arts fee and ACE fee and charging all students a Student Extra Curricular Activity Fee at the start of school year and refunded at the end of school year to any student who does not participate in any extra curricular activity, how much would this be, and asked if waivers would be available.

***On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was
Motioned to move the approval of Proposed Budget FY 08.***

***On a motion by Mr. Garballey and seconded by Ms. Lovelace it was
Motioned to add in Social Studies Department Head into the FY 08 Budget.***

Additional questions were raised about the Social Studies Department Head due to the impact of the reduction of one more non-core teacher at the Ottoson Middle School. The three new members Ms. Burns, Mr. Curran and Mr. Spangler mutually agreed they were not comfortable about reducing staff and requested more data and evidence on how this will impact the students. They also requested Budget detailed data to include names with salaries, making it more comfortable with the budget and see who it is actually affecting.

Mr. Garballey, Ms. Sheffler, Mr. Thielman and Ms. Lovelace all support the addition of the Social Studies Department Head and realize how difficult it is to make choices on adding this position in and then reducing a non-core teacher at the Ottoson Middle School.

Mr. Garballey removed the motion based on the new committee members needing more time to review the budget.

Mr. Curran handed out Budget Proposals related to budget lines items for Athletics and an analysis of enrollment ratio of students to deans.

***On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Garballey it was
Voted to suspend Mr. Thiemann's motion on the approval of the Proposal Budget of FY 08 to May 8, 2007, date certain.
Vote 7 – 0 unanimous***

SCHOOL FACILITIES WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Sue Mazzearella, CFO gave background on MSBA, which was created in 2004 to replace SBA, and the work of the SFWG, this organization was put together by Town Meeting members last year. Ms. Mazzearella spoke about the MSBA rules and regulations and we need to follow. On June 2006, the data was received from the MSBA and the following was noted. The Thompson School was rated three, Stratton was rated two along with Arlington High School. All our new schools were rated one, one being the highest. The next steps to follow would be from the MSBA guidelines, and that would be for the Arlington Public Schools to submit the The Statement of Interest Forms. Which have been completed and signed off by the School Committee, Town Selectmen and the Superintendent of Schools. Then we would have to wait and let them tell us what we would need to do next. The new criteria does not consider the wants of the town, but the need based on MSBA priorities.

The priorities of MSBA would be:

1. Health and Safety
2. Existing Severe Overcrowding
3. Loss of Accreditation
4. Prevent Future Severe overcrowding
5. Increase Energy Conservation and Decrease Energy Costs
6. Short-term Enrollment Growth
7. Replace Obsolete Buildings
8. Transition from court ordered Racial Balance Districts to Walk-to Districts

Nearly all the needs are either enrollment/overcrowding issues or the inability to meet legal requirements. Arlington does not have these problems at this time. Now we wait, and the State will look at all 3's and 4's let us know the next steps, after July of 2007.

The SFWG has met and have discussed over the past year and agree that the preferred option to give to Town Meeting, with the endorsement of the Finance Committee is to wait one year and let the state take the first step. During this time, we will take money from capitol operation budget, which does not affect the school budget that has already been approved and put money into the Thompson and Stratton School and working on a detail schedule on the planning of each school and to work with each school principal.

Mr. Spangler thanked Superintendent Levenson and Ms. Mazzearella on all the work they have contributed to the SFWG this past year and that Ms. Mazzearella has included the Article 65 into the packets. He also spoke about the work that SFWG still needs to do to address the issues on the Article 65. Mr. Garballey questioned the reason why money was spent on Technology upgrades at Stratton and Thompson Schools, and this was for the purpose to create equity among elementary schools and provide students with up-to date technology.

***On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Garballey it was~
Voted to have this Committee reaffirm its commitment to the seven
neighborhood elementary schools.***

Vote: 5 in favor and Mrs. Lovelace and Ms. Sheffler abstained

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Ms. Lovelace stated that her reason for abstaining is that to commitment to

seven elementary schools involves a whole bunch of factors relative to redistricting and understanding what our needs are for elementary schools that may be different now than they were six years ago.~~She supports continuing to look at this issue but doesn't know enough right now to commit to seven neighborhood schools.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Levenson reported on the unfortunate threatening letter and anti-Semitic note two members of the Arlington community received.

Superintendent Levenson spoke about the CTDS program and how this service has grown over the past 10 years and continues to grow. He also reported many parents are thrilled by having the change and this implementation will bring more students back into the school district. No changes are being made in the IEP plans; all students needs will be met, and will be serviced by our own Arlington Public School professional staff.

Superintendent Levenson reported on the way parents were notified and noted that parents were not given the information from CTDS they needed to reassure them the program would be continuing but not serviced by CTDS. Superintendent Levenson wants Walker to provide oversight to make sure we are doing everything correctly and doing it extremely well. A meeting with parents is currently in place for April 26, 2007.

Superintendent Levenson present the Out of State conference data requested by the School Committee members. The expense sheet included the ASCD Conference, The Youth at Risk Conference and DMC Conference. A description of the Teacher Leadership Academy and the professional development budget data for the entire district was also presented

The School Committee requested the Superintendent to provide additional budget data for previous years from FY 05 to current to compare professional development line item with prior years.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Ms. Lovelace handed out an Arlington School Committee Communication Plan for 2007 – 2008.

SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Ms. Lovelace, Chair presented assignments and Subcommittee chairs for the School Committee Board for 2007-2008.

On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Mr. Garballey it was Voted to adopt the Arlington School Committee Subcommittees & Assignments for 2007 –2008. Vote 7 – 0 unanimous

SECRETARY'S REPORTS

On a motion by Mr. Garballey seconded by Ms. Burns it was Voted to move the 11:00 rule to 11:15 PM Vote 7 – 0 unanimous

All correspondence was received and presented by Mr. Thielman, MASC day on the hill is for May 1, 2007 and memo from Mr. Skidmore was read.

NEW BUSINESS

New School Committee Members Orientation Meeting is scheduled at the Robbins Whittemore House for May 2, 2007 3-6 pm and School Committee / Superintendent Retreat is scheduled for June 15, 2007 1-5 pm at the Robbins Whittemore House. The Budget Review meeting will be scheduled as soon as a date is determined.

Mr. Garballey invited all the STAND Day on the Hill, April 25, 2007 at 12:30 pm.

ADJOURN

On a motion by Mr. Garballey seconded by Mr. Curran it was Voted to adjourn at 11:10 pm Vote 7 – 0 unanimous

***Submitted by
Karen Fitzgerald
Administrative Assistant
School Committee***